

# Illinois College and Career Pathways: School Readiness Framework

REVISED AUGUST 2021

## INTRODUCTION

This school readiness framework has been developed by Education Systems Center at NIU (EdSystems) to support district, intermediary organization (such as an Education for Employment district, Regional Superintendent, joint district and community college collaboration, or economic development or collective impact organization), and school leaders to develop action plans for implementing college and career pathways. The indicators outlined in this framework are based on best practice, research, and implementation in the field. In particular, EdSystems has utilized Chicago Public Schools' Strategic Dual Credit Readiness Framework, District 214's Pathways Development Process, and the Great Lakes College and Career Pathways Partnership Quality Indicators as resources for the framework's development.

District, intermediary, and school teams are encouraged to use or adapt the Framework and the related Action Plan template to identify the status, responsibility parties, and timelines for various aspects of pathway implementation. Each component of the Framework has a related section of the Action Plan for both school- and district/intermediary- activities. For each activity, the status should be assessed as:

1. **Not Started:** The school or district/intermediary has not commenced work on this Indicator.
2. **Emerging:** The school or district/intermediary has commenced activities but has not yet reached proficiency.
3. **Proficient:** The level of proficiency as intended by the indicator has been reached, but further work is needed to ensure it is fully sustainable or scalable.
4. **Distinguished:** The school or district/intermediary has achieved proficiency and has in place systems and resources to ensure its sustainability; the organization is prepared to serve as a peer model to others implementing the same pathway.

## FRAMEWORK ELEMENTS

### 1. Leadership and Administrative Oversight

- a. The pathway has a school-based team that includes teachers, one or more counselors, and school administrators.
- b. The district has identified administrators to support the school-based team, and the school-based team has a point of contact for interfacing with district administrators.
- c. The pathways school-based team regularly communicates progress to both the district and the school Professional Learning Team, i.e. department heads or Academic leads within a school, and integrates pathway progress into the School Improvement Plan (SIP).

- d. Diverse student voices and parent/guardian perspectives are regularly involved in the decision-making process and feedback loop that impacts the pathway.

***District/Intermediary Role:***

- Establish a pathways advisory team that brings together representatives from the district, school, partner college(s), and industry/community leaders.
- Host a pathways launch meeting to develop broad buy-in and build connections between the school and other advisory team members.
- Establish regular meeting cadence (monthly or quarterly) for monitoring progress and providing supports.
- Provide exemplary models for including students and community members (such as parents/guardians) in pathways governance.

## **2. Pathway Coherence and Rigor**

- a. The school has developed a clear program of study indicating when students will take both career-focused and general education courses, aligned to either the State of Illinois Model Programs of Study or a similar district model addressing the College and Career Pathway Endorsement requirements.
- b. The pathway programs of study have a level of rigor and opportunity for early college coursework equal to or greater than that of non-pathways programs of study, i.e. college prep, honors, or selective programs within the school or district.
- c. The school has developed a plan to provide targeted academic supports that prepare students for the academic rigor of the pathway early and throughout high school.

***District/Intermediary Role:***

- Provide model pathways and access to related technical assistance (EdSystems, Illinois Manufacturers Association, etc.).
- Support submission of the pathway to ISBE for College and Career Pathway Endorsement approval.
- Provide resources for analyzing labor-market outcomes and pathway potential.
- District has verified that the pathway is a worthwhile opportunity for students, making sure that the pathway leads to multiple roles and occupations with job growth AND living wage potential.

## **3. Teacher Identification**

- a. The administrative team at the high school has identified at least one teacher for every pathway course whom they believe to be qualified to teach the course.
- b. Dual Credit:
  - i. The teacher has received approval from the partner college to teach the course **or**
  - ii. The school has developed an action plan to get one or more teachers the coursework necessary to offer dual credit coursework.



#### *District/Intermediary Role:*

- Help identify potentially eligible teachers.
- Facilitate review and approval process with partner college.
- Work with partner college to identify ways to make credentialing guidelines more accommodating for dual credit teachers.

#### **4. Curricular Quality**

- a. Teacher(s) of career-focused courses have aligned the curricula to applicable pathway competencies (PWR Technical and Essential Employability Competencies, Illinois Model Programs of Study Competencies).
- b. Teacher(s) incorporate culturally relevant pedagogical practices into career-focused courses, where possible.
- c. Teaching(s) of career-focused courses develop and refine curricula with input from pathway industry professionals.
- d. Dual Credit:
  - i. Teachers of courses develop or adapt curricula in conjunction with the partner college faculty member.
  - ii. Teachers works with partner college faculty members throughout the year to norm course content.

#### *District/Intermediary Role:*

- Provide applicable competencies and access to related technical assistance.
- Assist schools in connecting with industry professionals.
- Assist schools in connecting with partner college faculty and related PD.

#### **5. Instructional Quality**

- a. Academic and career-focused course teachers within and across grade levels have systematic opportunities for collaboration and to align and integrate curriculum as well as to plan and coordinate personalized student supports
- b. Authentic assessments and industry-aligned projects are used to evaluate the application of knowledge and skills toward pathway learning outcomes.
- c. Dual Credit:
  - i. Teacher(s) participate in discipline-specific dual credit professional developments at the partner college.
  - ii. Teacher(s) and early college liaison are given training on utilizing various partner college resources for students who need them.

#### *District/Intermediary Role:*

- Provide exemplary teacher collaboration models for schools to follow.
- Provide model assessments and industry-aligned projects, along with access to related technical assistance (such as EdSystems' team-based challenge resources).
- Ensure that teachers and school staff are included in any district-wide or college discipline-specific PD.



## 6. Work-Based Learning

- a. The school-based pathways team has established a pathways-specific work-based learning continuum in alignment with PWR Technical and Essential Employability competencies.
- b. Work-based learning continuum includes all the elements necessary for a College and Career Pathway Endorsement.
- c. The school has a plan for providing students time and space to engage in all experiences in the continuum and to make connections to academic coursework and postsecondary plans.
- d. The school conducts career preparation workshops with students that reinforce Essential Employability Competencies.

### *District/Intermediary Role:*

- Provide schools with work-based learning materials and resources, including technical and employability competencies.
- Include teachers and school-based staff in district- or region-wide work-based learning events (career expo, etc.).
- Assist schools in connecting with industry professionals and technical assistance.
- Where possible, establish partnerships with postsecondary institutions such that students can continue or expand on their work-based learning with existing employer partners and crosswalk prior WBL experiences to potential academic credit.

## 7. Course Scheduling and Setup

- a. The school's scheduler, working with the pathways team, develops a schedule that allows for students to take both the career-focused courses and additional general education and elective coursework.
- b. To the extent possible, pathway students participate as a cohort in academic and career-focused courses.
- c. All pathway students having a similar Intro-level course or experience to the pathway.

### *District/Intermediary Role:*

- Provide exemplary scheduling options to ensure schools have a template to follow.
- Connect schools with available local or national expertise.
- Provide examples of Intro-level career exploration courses if necessary.

## 8. Classroom Environment and Equipment

- a. The school has available or has ordered the necessary:
  - i. Textbooks
  - ii. Lab supplies
  - iii. Curriculum teacher resources
  - iv. Course specific lab equipment
  - v. Class and lab furniture
- b. The school has partnerships with employers for support of some future equipment needs.



*District/Intermediary Role:*

- Incorporate school equipment needs in-district and regional grant applications and fundraising.
- Assist schools in developing partnerships with employers for needs.

**9. Student Recruitment, Messaging, and Supports**

- a. School counselors and administrators understand pathways programs and receive professional development as to how to guide students into pathway selection and long-term benefits.
- b. A pathways outreach/marketing plan is in place with clear and consistent messaging to students and parents.
- c. Outreach and support strategies, particularly for historically marginalized students or underrepresented groups, are documented and informed by disaggregated participation and outcomes data.
- d. The school team has developed college readiness workshops or experiences aimed at preparing students to qualify for and succeed in dual credit and work-based learning opportunities.
- e. Community-based and student support organizations are engaged to determine student needs for wraparound supports, as well as to identify potential barriers to participation or success.

*District/Intermediary Role:*

- Provide model digital and hard copy marketing materials.
- Support school in hosting information sessions for students and parents.
- Provide professional development for counseling and post-secondary teams on benefits of model pathways.

**10. Data Monitoring, Continuous Improvement, and Inclusion**

- a. Disaggregated participation data are gathered and analyzed to inform strategic planning for equity and access, so that pathway participation demographics reflect the school's population to the extent possible.
- b. Emerging or continuing barriers to pathways participation and success are identified through analysis of disaggregated participation and outcomes data.
- c. Qualitative data from students are captured and reviewed to determine whether diverse populations feel comfortable, respected, and empowered within the pathway.

*District/Intermediary Role:*

- Provide templated data reports for school-level data analysis.
- Facilitate school-level data reviews.
- Provide tools for capture of qualitative information from student.

